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Chairman: Mr. Hart (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Barbados)

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In the absence of Mr. Wali (Nigeria), Mr. Hart (Barbados), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 50: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(b) International financial system and development (*continued*) (A/60/163)

(c) External debt crisis and development (*continued*) (A/60/139)

1. **Mr. Belkas** (Algeria) said that the international financial system was called upon to promote sustainable development, sustained financial growth and poverty eradication. It should allow all sources of development financing to be mobilized coherently and contribute to the implementation of an open, fair, regulated, non-discriminatory trading system.

2. His delegation was concerned about the increase in net transfers of financial resources from the developing countries to the developed countries, principally to service their growing external debt, but also to accumulate international exchange reserves to offset international financial instability. Despite increases in financial assistance to developing countries, FDI and ODA were still well below commitments. The international financial system needed to be reformed to deal with cyclical crises; a multilateral monitoring system should be established to ensure the stability of the whole system and, in particular, the coherence of the economic policies of the wealthiest countries. The Monterrey Consensus emphasized the need to expand and strengthen the participation of developing and transition economies in international economic decision-making and norm-setting. In that respect, the participation of developing countries in the Basel Committee could only result in a fairer system.

3. Despite a noteworthy improvement in the global economy in 2004, particularly owing to the results from the developing countries, many of them continued to suffer from heavy debt burdens. The United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the private sector should implement their commitments to relieve or cancel the debt of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries. In that respect, the Group of Eight's decision to cancel 100 per cent of the debt of 18 of the poorest countries in that group was very welcome. Algeria urged the international community as a whole to consider the middle-income countries and to find a viable solution to the heavy burden of debt that prevented their development and economic structural reform efforts. In the absence of draconian measures in the area of debt cancellation and an increase in ODA, there was a risk that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries and the Least Developed Countries would be unable to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The issue of long-term sustainable debt depended on various factors, including the growth and export perspectives of debtor countries. Supplementary investment financing resources and increased market access could promote a solution.

4. **Mr. Kapoma** (Zambia) said that the issue of external debt remained a grave concern to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. Despite the high economic growth of developing countries in 2004, as shown by the economic indicators, individual countries continued to face large, unsustainable debt burdens.

5. Zambia was one of the countries that had reached the HIPC Initiative completion point and welcomed the proposal of the Group of Eight to cancel 100 per cent of the outstanding debt of 18 of the countries concerned; it appealed to other donors to make a similar gesture. Nevertheless, it was essential that additional funding be made available to those countries. Zambia therefore called on the international community to honour its agreed target of allocating 0.7 per cent of GDP for ODA. It commended the European Union for establishing a time frame for achieving that target and urged other developed countries to do the same.

6. **Mr. Amolo** (Kenya) said that the rules governing debt servicing and repayment must recognize the special needs and conditions of developing countries. The Millennium Development Goals had identified "quick win" areas that required additional resources in order to change the current inequality in the world, including agriculture and food production, education, health and infrastructure. The international financial institutions should give priority to those areas when allocating resources and due recognition should be given to the most deserving developing countries. Since 2000, Kenya had aligned its annual resource allocation with specific sectoral needs, emphasizing the critical sectors highlighted by the Goals.

7. The limited influence of developing countries in decision-making and norm-setting, particularly within the Bretton Woods institutions, made them vulnerable to the whims of developed countries and international financial institutions. The international financial system needed to be reformed in order to reverse the current trend of net resource flows towards developed countries; to strengthen the international financial architecture; to enhance surveillance of national and multilateral financial policies; and to increase South-South cooperation in the international monetary system.

8. The global economy had shown strong growth in 2004, with developing countries experiencing the highest growth rates in over 30 years. That had led to an improvement in several debt indicators, especially for developing countries and, in particular, sub-Saharan Africa; however, that achievement was seriously compromised by the continued increase in net financial resource transfers owing to loan repayments. The debt problem faced by many developing countries continued to severely constrain their ability to accelerate economic development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

9. Kenya had not qualified for debt relief under the Group of Eight proposal; according to a report of the International Monetary Fund, the country's debt was sustainable. However, debt sustainability should be linked to a country's capacity to achieve its national development goals. Consequently, Kenya called for cancellation of its debt, so that resources used to service the debt could be redirected to implementing development goals.

10. While the extension of the sunset clause of the HIPC Initiative was welcome, the programme was being implemented too slowly and the eligibility criteria were too rigid; of 38 countries eligible for debt relief under the Initiative, only 18 had reached the completion point, with only one year remaining. Development partners should consider various existing conditions and challenges that might prevent recipient countries from addressing the required policies adequately. Relaxing the conditionalities and adopting realistic debt sustainability criteria would enable more developing countries to qualify for the Initiative. Lastly Kenya fully endorsed the call for cancellation of 100 per cent of the debt of all heavily indebted poor countries and all poor countries not in that group, thereby releasing the required resources to attain the Millennium Goals and other development goals.

11. **Mr. Elmerjerbi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the continuing increase in net resource outflows from developing countries should be reversed in order to provide those countries, as well as countries with economies in transition, with the resources which they urgently needed to fund development projects and carry out the structural reforms that would enhance their economies and the ability to compete on the global market. To that end, measures should be sought, inter alia, to improve the efficiency of the international financial system, enhance the allocation of resources to support development, address the main causes of financial instability in developing countries, improve their risk management and remove the conditionality of lending facilities. In that connection, it was important to broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making and norm-setting, as well as the role of South-South cooperation in the international monetary system. The Millennium Development Goals would be achieved only by comprehensively tackling the external debts of the developing countries, taking into account the circumstances of each one and the effect of external shocks. It was also imperative to find a solution to the debt problem of low- and middle-income countries that did not qualify for the HIPC Initiative.

12. **Mr. Adewui** (Togo) said that most of the South countries had developed credible national strategies to address their development problems, and had endeavoured to resolve the transparency and ownership issues that from time to time prevented them from achieving results in line with the sacrifices made. Despite such efforts, their performance fell substantially short of what was needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in eliminating poverty and hunger. The situation was largely attributable to development financing problems and the debt issue.

13. In regard to development financing, Governments were trying to improve the mobilization of internal resources and allocate more spending to high-priority areas. For some countries, aid conditionality was a growing problem. Development partners did not sufficiently appreciate the internal difficulties that certain countries faced, and that was Togo's situation. Accused of having a democratic deficit, Togo had been

deprived of external financial assistance for more than 10 years. Even though Togo had made remarkable strides during those years in the area of human rights, the country's external partners continued to delay resuming cooperation activities.

14. Most countries, because of their debt servicing burden, were not able to make the necessary investments to boost growth efficiently to make a significant impact on poverty reduction. Fortunately, the international community had recently been focusing greater attention on Africa. The G-8 decision to cancel the debt of 18 developing countries, 14 of them in Africa, was welcome and demonstrated the determination of the most highly industrialized countries to find a deeper solution to the issue of developing countries' external debt.

15. All least developed countries should benefit from the same treatment within a reasonable period of time, since the end of 2006 was the deadline for meeting the criteria that would permit them to be considered for debt relief under the HIPC Initiative. The issue should therefore be examined seriously so that resolutions might be adopted during the current session of the General Assembly, to enable the countries concerned not only to benefit from the HIPC Initiative but also from debt cancellation. Moreover, middle-income developing countries should not be left out, lest their situation worsen and more of their people be thrust into poverty. In some poor countries, domestic debt was growing, eroding the prospects for economic growth and impoverishing segments of the middle class.

16. **Ms. Hijazi** (Jordan) said that higher economic growth alone would not resolve the debt crisis; global mechanisms and initiatives were also needed, particularly since economic growth could be adversely affected by external shocks and was not therefore guaranteed. She welcomed the decision of the Group of Eight concerning debt cancellation for heavily indebted poor countries which were unlikely to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 without substantial development assistance.

17. Jordan's various debt crises had been triggered in the 1980s by the collapse of the global oil market and in the 1990s by the loss of remittances from Jordanian expatriates, whose sudden return home following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had also created an additional burden on the economy. Although Jordan had worked with international institutions to extricate itself from those difficulties, it still had a developing economy that remained vulnerable to global or regional crises. Moreover, it also still had a crippling external debt-to-GDP ratio of 84.6 per cent. The HIPC Initiative was welcome, but more attention should be devoted to lower middle-income countries, inhabited by over one quarter of the world's population.

18. **Mr. Baja** (Philippines) said that poverty could not be eradicated if the net transfer of international financial resources flowed to developed countries, especially in the face of rising oil and energy prices. To reduce poverty, the international community should organize deeper, wider and faster debt relief to low- and middle-income countries. Successful growth strategies required policy experimentation and a willingness to try unconventional solutions.

19. The Philippines was proposing the debt-for-equity programme, providing lenders with an opportunity to become shareholders. Under the programme, creditors — rich countries such as the G-8, multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and the Asian Development Bank, and large commercial banks — would plough back into debtor economies 50 per cent of an agreed portion of debt servicing payments. Those resources would be used to fund development projects — in such areas as reforestation, housing construction, hospitals, safe water systems and other infrastructure, or microfinancing — that could propel sustainable economic growth and development. That investment would translate into job creation, generate full-scale economic activities that would help achieve development goals and thereby constitute a major complement to the G-8 debt cancellation agreement. The proposed system involved no debt forgiveness or moratorium, required no new financial contributions from the rich countries, implied no devaluation of creditor claims, provided for voluntary participation by creditors, allowed them to choose which development projects to support and ensured that their equity, backed by tangible assets, would be negotiable and have an earnings potential. The Philippines and other debtor countries were prepared to propose specific projects to be financed under the programme.

20. Political will would be required on the part of developed and developing countries. The Secretary-General had encouraged the Philippines to share the idea widely. An expert committee to evaluate the proposal would be set up by the Chairman of the Paris

Club, and in that context the heads of the Italian and German Governments and senior officials of the United Kingdom Treasury on the International Poverty Reduction Team had promised to examine the merits of the scheme. The Asian Development Bank was prepared to cooperate in implementing the programme.

21. **Mr. Kondakov** (Russian Federation) noted that positive trends regarding the debt issue had been due to acceleration of economic growth in developing countries as a result of an increase in their exports of goods and services, and should continue. The forthcoming Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong should play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the Doha Round and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

22. Debt relief under the relevant IMF and World Bank initiatives could be a key source of financing for development. The decision on full cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries of Africa to the international financial institutions was crucial. Together with its G-8 partners, the Russian Federation provided various types of assistance to heavily indebted poor countries and took their interests into consideration in its international activities. As one of the leaders in terms of debt cancellation, the Russian Federation would in 2005 write off, on a bilateral basis under the HIPC Initiative, $2.2 billion in outstanding debt liabilities of the poorest African countries.

23. Although, raising ODA was a significant objective, aid quality, effectiveness and predictability were as important as quantity. Moreover, recourse to innovative sources of voluntary long-term financing for development was in keeping with the spirit and letter of the Monterrey Consensus. The initiatives proposed by various States in that area broadened the range of options that the international community could examine.

24. However, in respect of the introduction of international taxation, including the proposed tax on air tickets, it was premature to make any specific commitment unless a broad consensus was reached and the parliaments of the countries concerned approved the various schemes. Pilot projects launched or planned in that area could help clarify some methodological issues, particularly regarding fund collection, use and auditing. Moreover, implementation of the International Finance Facility would be incompatible with the budget legislation of many donor countries, including the Russian Federation. Furthermore, separating the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals from the stimulation of economic growth and automatically linking the allocation of additional resources to the main assistance targets could lead to less effective distribution of funds.

25. International efforts, inter alia at G-8 level, to reduce the costs of migrant remittances in order to enhance their stimulating impact on development, especially in the poorest countries, were a way of supporting the developing economies while combating money-laundering and terrorism financing. Russian regulations concerning remittances were liberal and efforts were under way to further decrease charges and facilitate procedures. Official remittances abroad by foreigners working in Russia had doubled in the first half of 2005 compared to the same period in 2004.

26. Ensuring the stability of the international financial system was the key to sustainable development. Priorities in that area included preventing financial crises, strengthening the national financing and banking sectors, improving their regulatory and supervisory systems and adjusting the pace of liberalization of financial markets to the specific economic and institutional conditions of each country. Effective functioning of those sectors was crucial to mobilizing domestic resources for economic development. The United Nations should further encourage common approaches to reinforcing the international financial system, in particular by promoting dialogue among the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization, regional financial institutions, regional United Nations commissions and private sectors.

27. **Mr. Chidyausiku** (Zimbabwe) said that the most difficult challenge confronting developing countries was the management of external debt, and yet most of the initiatives of the 1980s and 1990s did not address the type of debt prevalent in Africa. Although the HIPC Initiative was important, much more comprehensive debt relief was required if developing countries were to be provided with new opportunities to accelerate their development. Because a number of poor countries were ineligible for the HIPC Initiative, many developing countries, particularly in Africa, were less able to achieve sustained growth. The Initiative continued to be the policy framework for channelling the debt crisis, but it had proved ineffective in reducing

the unsustainable debt levels of the highly indebted countries. High indebtedness reduced the capacity of countries to attract investment, whether foreign or domestic, which resulted in limited economic growth and public investment, and thereby reduced expenditure on poverty-reduction programmes. Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals — to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger — was therefore compromised.

28. The solution to the debt crisis was debt cancellation, to break the vicious cycle in which many developing countries were trapped. The G-8 announcement of 100 per cent debt cancellation was a welcome acknowledgement that the system set up to manage debt was unsustainable. However, restricting debt cancellation to only 18 countries out of 60 or more that required cancellation was an issue of concern. Zimbabwe joined other countries in calling for the extension of debt relief to low- and middle-income countries with inadequate resources to finance the attainment of the Goals.

29. The 100 per cent debt cancellation initiative sought to cancel debts owed to the World Bank, IMF and the African Development Bank, and should therefore be implemented expediently. The countries chosen were the only ones certified by those institutions as having accomplished some degree of debt reduction. They were said to have reached the HIPC completion point in that they had implemented the sweeping neo-liberal economic reforms demanded by the programme, often with devastating results that deprived countries of policy space to implement their own priorities in poverty alleviation, and in most cases undermined a country's capacity to meet the Goals because the resources available for social expenditure were reduced.

30. The conditions for debt cancellation served to perpetuate the requirement that countries submit to demands that favoured the interests of foreign capital before their debt could be considered for cancellation. The 100 per cent debt cancellation arrangement should therefore be expanded to many other countries in need of it, while ensuring that new conditions were not created. Inclusive, comprehensive debt cancellation free of externally imposed political conditionalities should be carried out, and broadened to include debt owed to other multilateral and regional development banks.

31. **Mr. Tekalegn** (Ethiopia) shared the Secretary-General's view on the need to strengthen IMF financing for poor countries. Further debate on, and an early resolution of, the need to diminish conditionality and make it more supportive of growth and poverty reduction were required. Conditionality should be tailored to a country's circumstances, and an enhanced practical application of the guidelines on conditionality should be pursued.

32. Ethiopia agreed with the Secretary-General that voice and effective participation were issues at the core of the international financial institutions' legitimacy, relevance and effectiveness. The issue needed to be moved in tandem with the agreements of the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus, which would deepen the paradigm shift in development thinking. Mutual accountability and responsibility for development entailed consultation and participation with a view to accommodating the specific development challenges of each developing country.

33. Ethiopia welcomed the recent G-8 proposal to cancel 100 per cent of the outstanding debt of eligible heavily indebted poor countries owed to IMF, the International Development Association and the African Development Fund. That proposal needed to be implemented immediately so that the countries in question could begin making use of the resources thereby released in order to accelerate the implementation of the Goals.

Agenda item 73: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions (A/60/302)

34. **Mr. Bowden** (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)), introducing the Secretary-General's report on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for selected countries and regions (A/60/302), jointly prepared with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said that the report discussed six countries undergoing or emerging from humanitarian crises caused by conflict or natural disasters. Some of the countries covered received primarily reconstruction and development assistance.

35. In view of recurrent flood and drought cycles caused by water resources overuse, climate change, natural resources erosion and high population growth, developing economies in the Horn of Africa needed, in combination with short-term assistance, longer-term efforts to break the cycle of vulnerability by addressing the underlying poverty, malnutrition and chronic food insecurity and promoting development. In some areas, however, internal conflict and political crises made it difficult for aid to reach the populations that needed it most.

36. In Djibouti, the United Nations provided humanitarian relief to tens of thousands of inhabitants affected by three consecutive failed rainy seasons, cooperated with the Government on implementing a poverty reduction strategy to improve health and nutrition levels, encouraged private sector investment and contributed to job creation through microfinance and training in support of sectors that benefited the poor. Since the situation in Djibouti had stabilized, international assistance efforts should be reoriented from life-saving operations to sustainable economic development, and the situation in that country should no longer be considered under the agenda item on humanitarian assistance to countries.

37. In Ethiopia, the 2005 humanitarian appeal combined life-saving relief efforts with a productive safety net programme for food and non-food assistance aimed at stabilizing population groups chronically unable to feed themselves and encouraging long-term development.

38. In Somalia, more than 900,000 people were still suffering from the consequences of recurrent droughts, floods and the tsunami. The international community was responding with urgent food, water, shelter and medical care, while injecting cash into the economy and helping to rehabilitate water systems in order to ensure agricultural growth. An increase in inter-clan fighting had exacerbated malnutrition in some parts of the country and deprived humanitarian actors from access to people who needed food. In fact, continued killing and harassment of aid workers had significantly reduced their number in that literally deadly operating environment, and the quantity of aid delivered to the country. Ensuring the humanitarian staff's safety and access to all drought-affected areas was crucial to stabilizing the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

39. In Rwanda, significant progress had been made towards the rehabilitation of 1994 genocide survivors, particularly by resettling displaced persons, looking after orphans, helping survivors of sexual violence, many of whom were affected by HIV, and supporting the Government in improving the citizens' social and economic life and building key institutions to protect the community.

40. The advanced medical and technical assistance provided to more than 1.3 million people in the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, who still suffered from radioactive contamination as a result of 40 years of nuclear testing, illustrated the important role that the international community could play in addressing environmental emergencies.

41. In view of the progress achieved in Timor-Leste with regard to institution-building and attaining the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations mission to that country was expected to disband by the end of 2005. Yet issues such as the rule of law, justice, human rights, security sector support and assistance in relation to national elections in 2007 would continue to require international attention.

42. **Mr. Wahba** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that UNDP endorsed the comments made by OCHA concerning their joint report, and in particular the linkages between emergency relief, rehabilitation and longer-term development assistance. The United Nations activities covered by the report constituted multi-agency cooperation on clusters of issues. Furthermore, the report described activities undertaken in response to the request, formulated in General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, to focus assistance on building national capacities.

43. **Mr. Lynn** (Myanmar) pointed to the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, recent hurricanes in the southern United States, torrential rains and massive landslides in Central America, and the South Asian earthquake of October 2005 as vivid examples of the transborder character of natural disasters, which, although they caused untold suffering, also demonstrated the caring spirit and solidarity of mankind. In such crises, the United Nations played a crucial role in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

44. In response to the tsunami of 26 December 2004, ASEAN leaders had met on 6 January 2005 in Jakarta and adopted the Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004.

45. Because Myanmar had a coastline on the Indian Ocean, it had not been spared by the tsunami, although the impact had been minimal compared to other countries. Myanmar had addressed the situation effectively on its own, as well as cooperating with the United Nations and other agencies. It had been encouraging to see the international community come together and adopt the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005, at which stress had been placed on the need to develop and strengthen regional approaches to ensure rapid, effective disaster response in situations where national coping capacities were exceeded.

46. As a member of ASEAN, Myanmar was a party to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response signed on 26 July 2005 in Vientiane, which called for ASEAN members to cooperate in developing and implementing measures to reduce disaster losses.

47. The United Nations should improve its ability to make the best use of humanitarian capacity at different levels, including regional capacity, by working out procedures in a consistent manner to the benefit of the affected population. Myanmar had adopted effective national measures to address the challenges of the natural disaster, and was cooperating fully in regional and international forums with all the countries concerned. His country reaffirmed its commitment to play its part in humanitarian disaster relief efforts, was encouraged by the global community's demonstration of solidarity in addressing the challenges of natural disasters and strongly believed that work in that regard should be further developed, with the United Nations playing a crucial role.

48. **Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan), referring to the situation in the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, noted that his country was one of the sponsors of the draft resolution to be presented under the agenda item. He expressed his country's deep concern over the main conclusion of the Secretary-General's report: namely that, despite the efforts of the Government of Kazakhstan and the international community, not enough progress had been made to mitigate the suffering caused by years of nuclear testing. The high morbidity and mortality rates, environmental degradation, and economic problems had long-term consequences which would have a negative impact on Kazakhstan's development and its capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

49. Azerbaijan hailed the commitment of the Government of Kazakhstan to overcome the problem. Nevertheless, it had to be acknowledged that, as a landlocked country whose economy was in transition, Kazakhstan had limited capacities and continued international assistance was therefore required. The country's economic growth rate should not divert the international community's attention from the problem. The burden had to be shared, and the people of Kazakhstan had to be supported in their rehabilitation efforts.

50. A new programme for the period 2005-2007 to address solutions for problems of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site offered an important opportunity to strengthen cooperation and fulfil unimplemented pledges made at the 1999 Tokyo International Conference on Semipalatinsk. Sharing information and best practices in regard to medical rehabilitation, radiological security, and scientific and technical diversification could be valuable. Regional cooperation was a crucial component of the implementation process, including in the area of addressing environmental degradation. The United Nations should play a key role in mobilizing support, sharing lessons and expertise, and increasing awareness of the severity of the problem.

51. **Mr. Sadykov** (Kazakhstan) said that the situation in his country's Semipalatinsk region remained critical, with more than 1.3 million people still suffering from the effects of 468 nuclear tests conducted over a 40-year period. Economic growth over the past five years had allowed his Government to allocate more resources to rehabilitate the region. A number of programmes in the fields of health, education, ecology, water and sanitation were focusing on the rehabilitation and economic development of Semipalatinsk. In 2005, the Government would launch a programme to improve the ecological, economic, medical and social factors that affected the living standards of the region's population. However, much remained to be done to solve the deep-rooted and highly technical problems of

radioactive contamination in the region. Accordingly, as recommended in the report, Member States should, in partnership with his Government, strengthen their efforts to assist the people of Semipalatinsk.

52. **Mr. Gospodinov** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that the death and destruction caused by the recent earthquake in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan and by hurricane Stan in Central America, were vivid reminders of the need to support disaster relief. IFRC was committed to achieving the objectives and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's reports and supported the recommendations to strengthen regional, national and community risk reduction, disaster preparedness and response. Indeed, the core activities of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies were community participation in disaster preparedness and response. Community participation was reinforced by disaster-management training and coordination with regional organizations, Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental systems. An example of such an effort was the annual pre-hurricane season workshop and contingency planning meeting involving 33 Caribbean and Central American Red Cross societies, the United Nations, the European Union and many non-governmental agencies.

53. IFRC had undertaken, as part of a coordinated initiative with the Niger Government, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and other partners, to participate in the largest distribution of mosquito nets in Africa to protect every child under 5 in the Niger. The $13.3 million programme was jointly financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Canadian Government, with the support of the Measles Partnership, Global Polio Eradication Initiative and the Roll Back Malaria Partnership. The ever-challenging demands of coordinating assistance in major natural disasters were a continuing priority for IFRC.

54. IFRC coordinated its efforts with the United Nations and other agencies while retaining the independent nature of the movement. Humanitarian assistance must take recovery and longer-term development needs into consideration at an early stage. Countries recovering from conflict or disasters needed to invest in institutional capacity-building to strengthen the effectiveness of the public sector. After citing examples of the invaluable support provided by Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to local authorities at the community level in various countries, including Kazakhstan and Timor-Leste, he urged Governments to mobilize the resources and skills of their national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and include them in the formulation of disaster management and development plans.

55. **Mr. Tekalegn** (Ethiopia) said that his Government had two complementary food security plans — the humanitarian appeal process and the productive safety nets programme. The objective of the programme was to achieve the food security needs of about five million Ethiopians within three to five years by tackling the root causes of food insecurity, including the pressure of rapid human and livestock population growth; desiccation of water resources; near complete dependence on rain-fed agriculture; and lack of access to irrigation. Poor access to basic social services, such as public health and education, as well as limited access to technology and other inputs, were basic challenges to improving farming productivity and income. In order to ensure that the cycle of food insecurity was not perpetuated, it was imperative for Ethiopia and its partners to continue to implement the programme over its entire lifespan.

56. The response to the joint humanitarian appeal for 2005 had been substantially lower than in 2004. Noting that only 48 per cent of the non-food component of the appeal had been covered, he reiterated the importance of full coverage of that component in assisting his country to make the transition from relief to development. The main responsibility for improving the humanitarian situation and creating conditions for long-term development lay with the Government, which had an efficient early warning system for both food and non-food requirements to predict disasters and respond quickly in order to minimize their impact. Referring to the Millennium Development Goals, he recalled Ethiopia's agreement with its partners that it would need $500 dollars a year for five years to achieve its goal of ensuring food security over that period. In that regard, his Government had allocated more than 2 billion birr under its 2004/2005 budget to cover, as agreed, 40 per cent of that cost. If all the partners fulfilled their part of the bargain, Ethiopia would achieve food security within the specified time frame.

57. **Mr. Siregar** (Indonesia) stressed the importance of assisting Timor-Leste in its efforts to integrate into the world economy and invited the United Nations and

other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to support the Government and people of Timor-Leste in their nation-building and capacity-building efforts. Indonesia and Timor-Leste had established satisfactory bilateral relations and would continue to pursue a positive relationship, including through the establishment of a truth and friendship commission. Indonesia strongly supported Timor-Leste and would continue to take part in international efforts to develop that country.

58. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that the world was witnessing an unprecedented cycle of natural disasters that had wreaked havoc across countries and continents. The time had come for the international community to agree on mechanisms to coordinate effective and immediate relief assistance to address long-term reconstruction needs of the affected countries. In that context, he supported the Secretary-General's recommendation for strengthening regional, national and community risk reduction, disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. The Economic and Social Council should work towards strengthening mechanisms to enhance the international community's capacity to ensure a rapid response to the increased frequency of natural disasters.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.